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CD/ED
19 January 1956

SC No. 00148/56
Copy No. 103

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

DOCUMENT NO. 55
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒
☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2010
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 17 JAN 1980 REVIEWER: 019360

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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1. USSR SUGGESTS GREAT-POWER GUARANTEE OF
IRAN'S NEUTRALITY

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Foreign Minister Molotov told the Iranian ambassador on 13 January that if Iran is not satisfied with the assurances of nonaggression in the

Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1927, the treaty could be replaced by a four-power guarantee of Iranian neutrality. According to the Iranian minister of foreign affairs, who reported the conversation to the American embassy in Tehran, Molotov stated that the USSR would be happy to participate in such a guarantee if Iran would withdraw from the Baghdad pact.

The Shah is concerned over the possibility that the USSR may propagandize the offer which, he believed, would hearten the neutralists, spread unrest among the population, and undermine the Iranian government. Iran's decision to join the pact was made largely on the basis of Iran's security, and the man in the street would say in the light of the Soviet offer, "What more do you want?" The Shah suggested immediate strong counteraction from the West, and the foreign minister stated that US adherence to the Baghdad pact and announcement of economic assistance to Iran would be "most helpful."

Comment

The USSR on several occasions since August has held out the possibility of great-power guarantees of neutrality to several Middle East states, both singly and collectively. Moscow probably believes that the offer of guaranteed neutrality as an alternative to membership in the Baghdad pact will ultimately cause Iran to question the wisdom of maintaining its close ties with the West.

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2. MOSCOW OFFERS AID IN CAMPAIGN TO INFLUENCE TURKS

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On the occasion of the presentation of credentials by the Turkish ambassador in Moscow, President Voroshilov went out of his way to emphasize that since Turkey and the USSR were neighboring states, they must above all lay the foundations for improved relations, according to the American embassy in Moscow.

Voroshilov repeated Khrushchev's remarks to the Supreme Soviet that blame for the deterioration of relations was not all on one side.

Turkish president Bayar, in a long presentation of Turkish affairs to Admiral Fechteler on 16 January, said that the USSR has approached the Turks both in Moscow and Ankara with offers of as much as they need in goods and loans to help them out of their present financial and economic straits "without any strings attached."

Bayar also told Fechteler that the USSR is at the same time distributing leaflets attacking the policies of the Turkish government and calling on the people to bring about a change. Bayar said the leaflets had been smuggled into Turkey and were being distributed in principal Turkish cities where there are large numbers of "marginal workers."

Comment

These Soviet moves are part of Moscow's intensified campaign to influence the Turks. Despite Turkey's past rejection of Soviet approaches, the USSR probably will make it a prime target in the forthcoming months with the aim of weakening the keystone of Western defense planning in the area.

The Turks have long regarded the USSR with deep distrust and suspicion. They probably will exploit friendly Soviet overtures in their effort to speed an American loan, but the present Turkish government will move reluctantly and cautiously toward any acceptance of Soviet aid.

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3. POPULAR FRONT FORMED FOR GREEK ELECTIONS

Comment on:

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The formation on 18 January of a Popular Front for the Greek elections gives a Communist-front party its first strong voice in Greek politics for several years. The Front may offer a serious challenge to Prime Minister Karamanlis' National Radical Union in next month's elections.

The Popular Front is made up of the Communist-front EDA and several center parties including Papandreou's Liberal Party and Venizelos' Liberal Democratic Union. Under the agreement forming the coalition, EDA, which now has no representation in parliament, would almost certainly gain 20 seats out of 300 in the new parliament if the Popular Front should win. The primary objective of the Front, however, is said to be the dissolution of the new parliament and a call for new elections under a changed electoral system.

Karamanlis recently expressed serious concern over the growing polarization of Greek politics, which he recognizes as dangerous to the Greek national interest. Formation of a Popular Front government might immediately result in a move by the ultraconservative secret military society IDEA to overthrow the Front and establish a rightist military dictatorship.

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4. THE DEEPENING FRENCH POLITICAL CRISIS

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The leaders of the Faure-Pinay forces agree [REDACTED] a coalition government with the Republican Front would result in

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"do-nothing policies" and would be doomed to failure, according to the American embassy in Paris. The Faure-Pinay parties, which include the Popular Republicans, would probably vote against Mendes-France, but they would be expected to abstain on the investiture of a Socialist-led government.

The embassy believes the influence of the Poujade movement has not reached maximum strength, and warns that its fascist tendencies may increase as the group's power grows.

Comment

The secretary general of the assembly foresees a two-week crisis while attempts are being made to form a new government. The Popular Republicans are on record as opposing a government which fails to repudiate Communist support, and leaders of the other elements of the outgoing coalition are maintaining their public position that a minority government is out of the question. The Socialists, however, are now publicly committed to accept Communist parliamentary support.

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5. BRITISH PLANNING TO REDUCE MILITARY FORCES
IN HONG KONG

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The British plan to reduce their 15,000-man military force in Hong Kong to approximately one third of a division, the number needed to maintain internal security only,

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The plan calls for one artillery regiment to depart in February and one battalion probably in August. One major unit will probably leave every six months thereafter.

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Comment

The reported plan is probably intended to alleviate troop deficiencies elsewhere, especially in the Strategic Reserve stationed in the United Kingdom. The British perennially contend with military manpower shortages arising from their manifold commitments.

The British withdrawals are not expected to affect the attitude of the Chinese Communists toward Hong Kong. Their present aim is to divide the United Kingdom and the United States on Far Eastern policies and to maintain their "peaceful" posture.

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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION
(Information as of 1700, 18 January)

An Israeli spokesman announced on 17 January that an Israeli patrol was fired on near the Gaza strip but suffered no casualties. The American army attaché in Tel Aviv states that daily skirmishes along the Egyptian border are now routine, but are carefully recorded by Israel.

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India's chief UN delegate, V. K. Krishna Menon, visited Cairo on 17 and 18 January, probably hoping to play a moderating role in discussions regarding the Baghdad pact and the Arab-Israeli dispute. Both Prime Minister Nehru and Menon may feel that Menon's role in handling international problems may enable him to help lessen tension in the Near East at this time.

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